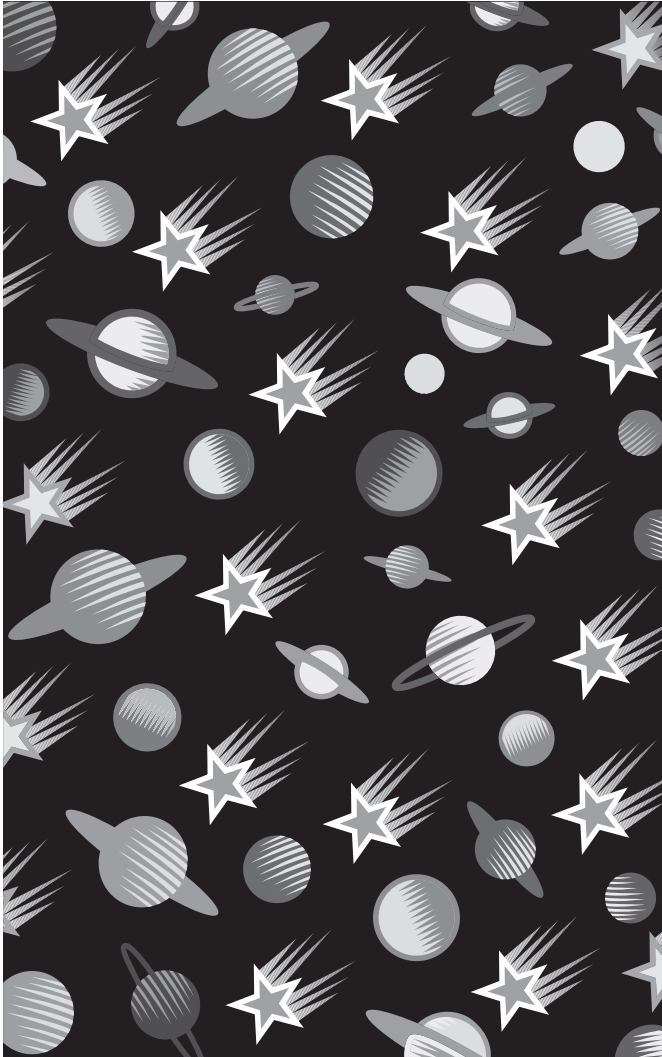


# Classic Science Fiction Writers

## In their own words...

Classic SF writers talk about themselves and their writing. All quotes are the author's own words, mostly from interviews.



“**How do I keep an interest with science fiction?**  
**There are some good writers out there, is the answer.**”  
**Larry Niven**

**A booklist of classic SF authors and some of their best works.**

All books on this list are in the F Sci section, filed alphabetically by author's last name. Only a few have been suggested for each author, but you may enjoy all of his or her works.

Hugo award – an award voted on by those with memberships in the annual World Science Fiction Conventions.

Nebula award – given by members of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association for outstanding work.

### **Brian Aldiss**

The truth is science fiction, because we all live in a world that's changed forever. It's never going to go back to what it was in the '60s or the '70s or the '30s, or whatever. It's changed.

**The Eighty Minute Hour**

**Greybeard**

**Hothouse** Hugo award

### **Poul Anderson**

... So much American science fiction is parochial -- not as true now as it was years ago, but the assumption is one culture in the future, more or less like ours, and with the same ideals, the same notions of how to do things, just bigger and flashier technology. Well, you know darn well it doesn't work that way...

**Tau Zero** Hugo award

**The Queen of Air and Darkness** Hugo, Nebula award

**The People of the Wind** Hugo award

**The Boat of a Million Years** Hugo award

### **Alfred Bester**

I'm not much interested in extrapolating science and technology; I merely use extrapolation as a means of putting people into new quandaries which produce colorful pressures and conflicts.

**The Demolished Man** Hugo award

**The Stars My Destination**

### **Lloyd Biggle, Jr.**

I am a story teller. It is an ancient and honorable profession, though I don't know how many authors actually think of themselves in this light. To the story teller, the most important character in any story is the reader.

**Monument**

**The Rule of the Door, and Other Fanciful Regulations**

**The Still, Small Voice of Trumpets**

### **Fredric Brown**

Don't ever sell mankind short by saying there's anything they can't do.

**Angels and Spaceships**

**Best of Fredric Brown**

**Paradox Lost**

### **John Brunner**

The real universe has a marvelous and unique quality, in as much as it, and only it, can take us completely by surprise.

**Crucible of Time**

**The Sheep Look Up**

**Stand on Zanzibar** Hugo award

### **Algis Budrys**

Science is a guy at a blackboard or staring into a cloud chamber. Technology is what's behind your new car or a new airplane -- and that's what ninety percent of science fiction is all about.

**Hard Landing**

**Michaelmas**

**Rogue Moon**

## **Octavia Butler**

I'm comfortably asocial—a hermit in the middle of Seattle—a pessimist if I'm not careful, a feminist, a Black, a former Baptist, an oil-and-water combination of ambition, laziness, insecurity, certainty, and drive.

**Kindred**  
**Patternmaster**  
**Imago**

## **Jack Chalker**

The term I always hated in a [book] promotion was “beyond your imagination.” Nobody's come close yet. I think science fiction will be well ahead just about at all times, so long as there is a venue to have it published and read.

**Lords of the Middle Dark**  
**Midnight at the Well of Souls**

## **Suzy McKee Charnas**

As a reader, I like to be shown something in fiction that I don't ordinarily see in my daily world, something mysterious, grand, glorious, or terrifying; that's also what I try to provide in my own work.

**Motherlines**  
**Walk to the End of the World**

## **Samuel Delany**

... And when I got through three-going-on-four science fiction novels, one day it occurred to me, "Oh, I must be a science fiction writer." But I never made a decision to be a science fiction writer. That just happened.

**Babel-17** Nebula award  
**Dhalgren**  
**The Einstein Intersection** Nebula award  
**Nova**

## **Philip K. Dick**

It's really as if the world caught up with science fiction. The years went by and the disparity, the temporal gap, began to close until finally there was no temporal gap. We were no longer writing about the future. In a sense, the very concept of projecting it ahead is meaningless, because we are there, literally, in our actual world.

**Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (Blade Runner)**  
**The Man in the High Castle** Hugo award  
**A Scanner Darkly**

## **Gordon Dickson**

Fence off a section of your mind...and let it go back to swamp-grass and undisturbed forest. Make it a wild-thought refuge; and after a while a novel will come to nest and flourish there.

**The Dorsai! Books**  
**None But Man**  
**Way of the Pilgrim**

## **Thomas M. Disch**

Well, we were the cultural and social change going on. We were part of it, we reflected it in our own lives, we mirrored it, and we stimulated it by our writings and other vehicles. It was mutually reinforcing. It's nice to have been part of history that way.

**Camp Concentration**  
**Fun with Your New Head**  
**The Sub**

## **George Alec Effinger**

[His favorite word, he once said, was 'terrific.'] I have my characters say it under any possible circumstances. It means whatever it means at the moment, from tremendous praise to tremendous put-down.

**Irrational Numbers**  
**What Entropy Means to Me**  
**When Gravity Fails**

## **Harlan Ellison**

I will not become a person who has lost the ability to create the art of the past. That's the way I feel about it, and it has nothing to do with hating technology. I don't. I hate the uses that technology is put to.

**Dangerous Visions** (ed.)  
**Ellison Wonderland**  
**"Repent, Harlequin!" said the Ticktockman** Hugo, Nebula award

## **Philip José Farmer**

...Despite my vast interest in other universes and new ideas and space, travel and time travel...the basic thing is human character, which is the main thing of most writers....This world inside your skull and the skulls of other people is really more fascinating and as far as I'm concerned is still unpredictable...

**Dayworld**  
**To Your Scattered Bodies Go** Hugo award  
**World of Tiers**

## **Ron Goulart**

I don't imagine it's any easier for a starting writer [to get published] than it is for an old coot like me. Being a humorist is often like having a loathsome social disease.

**Broke Down Engine, and Other Troubles with Machines**  
**The Hellhound Project**  
**What's become of Screwloose? And other inquiries**

## **James Gunn**

Science Fiction is the branch of literature that deals with the effects of change on people in the real world as it can be projected into the past, the future, or to distant places. It often concerns itself with scientific or technological change, and it usually involves matters whose importance is greater than the individual or the community; often civilization or the race itself is in danger.

**The Joy Makers**  
**The Listeners**  
**Some Dreams are Nightmares**

## **Joe Haldeman**

...Science fiction is usually about the present, not the future—it's a literary device for examining what we are, rather than where we are going.

**The Forever Peace** Hugo, Nebula award  
**The Forever War** Hugo, Nebula award  
**Mindbridge**

## **James Hogan**

I don't like to write the same thing every time, crank out the same formula. When it comes to something like alternate realities or quantum mechanics or time travel, you may have two or three different ideas as to how it might work. Why not write a story around each of them?

**Code of the Lifemaker**

**The Multiplex Man**

**The Two Moons (Inherit the Stars and The Gentle Giants of Ganymede)**

## **Fred Hoyle**

Space isn't remote at all. It's only an hour's drive away if your car could go straight upwards.

**The Black Cloud**

**Rockets in Ursa Major**

## **Damon Knight**

We live on a minute island of known things. Our undiminished wonder at the mystery which surrounds us is what makes us human. In science fiction we can approach that mystery, not in small, everyday symbols, but in bigger ones of space and time.

**The Best of Damon Knight**

**CV**

**Humpty Dumpty: An Oval**

## **Keith Laumer**

I prefer to address myself to those values which have been important to man ever since he became man, and will continue to be of value as long our species is human. Among these values are truth and beauty, loyalty and justice, kindness and gentleness, [and] ethics and integrity.

**The Compleat Bolo**

**Dinosaur Beach**

**The Glory Game**

## **Ursula Le Guin**

White is not the norm for me, or equivalent to being human, as in so much of the fantasy I read. I made a conscious choice to make most of my characters people of colour.

**The Beginning Place**

**The Dispossessed** Hugo, Nebula award

**The Left Hand of Darkness** Hugo, Nebula award

## **Fritz Leiber, Jr.**

Explanations are never the most interesting part of science.

**The Big Time** Hugo award

**A Specter is Haunting Texas**

**The Wanderer** Hugo award

## **Stanislaw Lem**

I was using humour for various reasons. ...Human irresponsibility will lead us to crazy situations. In order to present those crazy situations, I had to create a pattern of levity.

**Memoirs Found in a Bathtub**

**Solaris**

**Tales of Pirx the Pilot**

## **Larry Niven**

[Why is space important?...]The wealth of the universe is all over your head. We need to take command of the solar system to gain that wealth, and to escape the sea of paper our government is becoming, and for some decent chance of stopping a Dinosaur Killer asteroid....but since I was a kid I've just wanted to go.

**Dream Park**

**The Mote in God's Eye**

**Ringworld** Nebula award

## **Frederik Pohl**

What keeps me interested in SF is science—that is, the constantly unfolding observational and theoretical knowledge of how the universe works—and how this can be expressed in SF stories.

**Gateway** Hugo, Nebula award

**The Space Merchants**

**The Starchild Trilogy**

## **Mike Resnick**

I think everyone pretty much agrees that if we can reach the stars we're going to colonize them, and that if we colonize enough of them we're going to come into contact with an alien civilization. One of my favorite themes is the consequences of that contact between colonists and native life forms.

**Inferno**

**Tales of the Galactic Midway**

**Will the Last Person to Leave the Planet Please Shut Off the Sun?**

## **Spider Robinson**

Over and over again I find in my short stories that I am, by policy, optimistic.

**Callahan's Crosstime Saloon**

**Stardance** Hugo, Nebula award

**Telepath**

## **Fred Saberhagen**

Probably all the books I've ever written have been efforts to define the boundaries of humanity.

**The Berserker series**

**Empire of the East**

**The First Swords**

## **Robert Silverberg**

The other thing I've always tried to do in my science fiction... is to depict things vividly that nobody else has seen, to create images, worlds, cultures even. To show people wonders.

**The Cube Root of Uncertainty**

**Lord Valentine's Castle**

**The Stochastic Man**

## **Clifford Simak**

When I talk of the purpose of life, I am thinking not only of human life, but of all life on Earth and of the life which must exist upon other planets throughout the universe. It is only of life on Earth, however, that one can speak with any certainty.

**Destiny Doll**

**Project Pope**

**Way Station** Hugo award

## **E. E. "Doc" Smith**

[Science fiction readers] are imaginative, with a tempered, analytical imaginativeness which fairy tales will not satisfy. We are critical. We are fastidious. We have a mental grasp and scope which do not find sufficient substance in stereotypes, in the cut and dried.

**The Gray Lensman**  
**The Skylark of Space**

## **Norman Spinrad**

I've always been primarily interested in the relationship between the total external surround, the culture, the political matrix, the technology, etc., and the internal human consciousness. And particularly the clashes and interactions of two or more different cultures, hence two or more different styles of consciousness.

**Bug Jack Barron**  
**The Void Captain's Tale**

## **Theodore Sturgeon**

To me, science fiction is knowledge fiction, and it's knowledge not only of physical and chemical laws but also the quasi-and soft sciences, and also matters of the human heart and mind. This is all knowledge, and so to me it's all legitimate science fiction.

**More than Human**  
**The Ultimate Egoist**  
**Venus Plus X**

## **James Tiptree, Jr.**

[Alice Sheldon, after it was revealed that that she had been writing for years as James Tiptree Jr., said]: Tiptree, by merely existing unchallenged for eleven years, had shot the stuffing out of male stereotypes of women writers. Even non-feminist women were secretly gleeful. The more vulnerable males discovered simultaneously that Tiptree had been much overrated, and sullenly retired to practice patronizing smiles.

**Her Smoke Rose Up Forever**  
**Tales of the Quintana Roo**  
**Up the Walls of the World**

## **A. E. van Vogt**

Reading science fiction lifted me out of the do-be-and-have world and gave me glimpses backward and forward into the time and space distances of the universe. . .

**The Players of Null-A**  
**Slan**  
**The Weapon-Makers**

## **Jack Vance**

There was a long period in which I wrote a lot of junk, as an apprentice, learning my trade. I found out I was no good at gadget stories, or at least they were very boring to me, and I found out that I didn't enjoy writing whimsy, and I finally blundered into this thing which I keep on doing, which is essentially a history of the human future.

**The Demon Princes saga**  
**The Last Castle**

## **John Varley**

I don't believe in Utopia, because once you've built it, who are you going to put in it?

**The Ophiuchi Hotline**  
**The Persistence of Vison**  
**Titan**

## **Kate Wilhelm**

I believe we are living in an age of cataclysmic changes; we are living in an age that is the end of an era. My work is my attempt to understand how we got here, why we stay, and what lies ahead if anything does.

**Huysman's Pets**  
**The Infinity Box**  
**Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang**

## **Jack Williamson**

I see science as a sort of mystery story about the nature and meaning of the universe...There's the feeling that the story keeps unfolding, a new chapter every day.

**Brother to Demons, Brother to Gods**  
**The Humanoid Touch**  
**Manseed**

## **Gene Wolfe**

We believe that we invent symbols. The truth is that they invent us; we are their creatures, shaped by their hard, defining edges.

**Free Live Free**  
**Nightside on the Long Sun**  
**The Shadow of the Torturer**

## **John Wyndham**

Behind the greatest scientific romances there is a purpose. Whether they show a Utopia, a desolation, or a world still muddling along, they are sowing new thoughts in the reader's mind.

**Day of the Triffids**  
**The Midwich Cuckoos**  
**The Seeds of Time**

## **Roger Zelazny**

I see myself as a novelist, period. I mean, the material I work with is what is classified as science fiction and fantasy, and I really don't think about these things when I'm writing. I'm just thinking about telling a story and developing my characters.

**Lord of Light** Hugo award  
**Nine Princes in Amber**  
**Roadmarks**  
**This Immortal** Hugo award

## **You may also enjoy:**

**The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of: How Science Fiction Conquered The World** by Thomas M. Disch  
809.3876 D

**Science Fiction of the 20th Century : an Illustrated History** by Frank M. Robinson  
809.3876 R FOLIO

**What Fantastic Fiction Do I Read Next? A Reader's Guide to Recent Fantasy, Horror and Science Fiction**  
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